

Arms Panel Members Get Taste of Glasnost

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For decades, the House Armed Services Committee has been readying the nation's war chests for the day the Russians would come.

Yesterday, they did.

In one of the most incongruous scenes in congressional history, a group of top Soviet legislators and defense officials watched as members of the Armed Services Committee debated which weapons the U.S. military should buy for protection against their nation.

When Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.) shouted his skepticism of the need for the Air Force's B-2 "stealth" bomber, the Soviet delegation nodded and smiled in agreement at what the interpreter was saying in Russian.

Air Force officials at the witness table were stone-faced.

The Soviets, members of the new Defense and State Security Committee of the Supreme Soviet, their nation's legislative body, began a two-week tour of U.S. military installations at a budget hearing of the House panel. The Soviet legislators were hosts to the Armed Services Committee on a tour of Soviet military facilities last August.

In a discussion among members of the two legislative groups yesterday afternoon, the Soviets said their optimism over the future of a reformed political system is tempered by many anxieties.

"We have four generations that have grown up under conditions of socialism," said Oleg Sergeyevich Belyakov, who works on defense issues as a member of the Central Committee. "To take a different

path of private ownership is very difficult. My salary is 1,000 rubles a month . . . I don't have the salary or enough physical and moral energy to start up a business."

In response to questions from members of Congress, most of the visiting Soviets nodded that they also supported independence for the Baltic states.

But that support did not come without some words of caution. Belyakov noted that severing the Baltic states from the Soviet Union could create havoc for some industries.

Factories in Lithuania, for example, produce the thin copper wire used in all Soviet television sets, according to Belyakov. If the flow of that material to the Soviet Union is cut off, "all of our television plants will stop," he said.